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The Teaching–Learning of Community Social Work: Debating as an Instrument to Acquire Transversal Competences

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Abstract: Debating represents an active teaching–learning method in higher education. Engaging in debates helps to acquire and develop transversal skills, which are essential to successfully function in personal, academic, and professional spheres. In this quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory study, we analyse how attitudes included within transversal competences were acquired through a debate activity conducted as a part of the social work programme at the University of Alicante. A total of 74 students participated, with an average age of 22.34 years, the majority of which were women. The students were divided into two evaluation groups: a peer evaluation group and a teacher evaluation group. Using an ad hoc questionnaire, three categories of variables were studied: sociodemographic variables; organisational and activity evaluation variables; and variables relating to the acquisition of attitudes. The results indicated that debating favoured communication, innovation and entrepreneurship, social commitment, critical thinking, information management, autonomy and self-regulation, as well as teamwork. Variations were also found according to the university admission modality and the evaluation agent. These results highlight not only how useful debating can be as a pedagogical tool, but also the need to consider different contextual factors when implementing debate activities in the context of university studies.

Keywords: higher education; community social work; active learning; debate; transversal competences

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1. Introduction

1.1. Higher Education and New Forms of Active Learning

Since its creation following the Bologna Declaration, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been promoting the implementation of an active teaching–learning system. The goal is to give greater coherence "to higher education systems in Europe" [1], to the principles of the knowledge society, to global education, and to scientific thinking [2,3]. The theoretical frameworks used to encourage students to actively build their learning process and to evaluate their acquired knowledge include currents such as constructivism, situationism, and the sociocultural approach [4]. In this way, university education encourages "flexible learning", regarding knowledge as a "constructive process" [5] (p. 3169).

Active methods, such as project-based learning [6], service learning [7], game-based learning [8], flipped classroom [9] or visual-thinking [10], pursue the transformation of higher education, placing students at the centre of their own learning process, reflecting, participating, cooperating and creating knowledge [11,12]. Teachers, for their part, act as facilitators who guide and motivate students in the acquisition of the competences proper to each degree in order to develop critical reflection, creative thinking, and continuous communication [13–23]. The objective is to stimulate and motivate both educators and learners to adopt active roles in teaching–learning processes [12].

Huber [4] highlights two major university education approaches: active learning and social learning. Active learning implies that each person can and should learn for themselves, while social learning emphasizes the key role of social interaction and sociocultural factors in knowledge-building. Concepts such as "active learning", "active teaching" and "continuous assessment" [24] (p. 7) address a novel age and new generations.

Blanco et al. [14] highlight the significance of active and meaningful teaching–learning strategies designed to transform students' roles and to promote the integration of knowledge domains. For Baque-Reyes et al. [25] and Moreira [26], the latter requires the acquisition of new, meaningful knowledge that fosters understanding, critical thinking, and argumentation skills. These strategies are based on activities that pursue two objectives: on the one hand, promoting greater student autonomy through the acquisition of specific competences; and on the other, allowing them to participate, analyse, and compare the information they receive in order to connect it with curricular knowledge and to evaluate its meaning [27].

1.2. The Bologna Process and the Unification of Curricular Competences

Since the EHEA was implemented, there has been mounting scientific, academic, and professional interest in higher education regarding the evaluation of degree knowledge domains, as well as the identification of common competences needed by graduates in higher education. Illustrations of the latter include Fallows and Steven [28], the REFLEX project (2004–2007) within the EU Socrates programme [29], and the Tuning Project [15].

The Tuning Project [15] is undoubtedly among the most ambitious European projects. It seeks to implement Bologna Declaration goals in higher education based on the experiences of the ERASMUS and SOCRATES programmes, which were began in 1987. The Tuning Project focuses on the structure and content of each degree and unifies degree objectives in order to build generic and specific competences across the first and second cycles of university studies. It has sought to reach points of agreement and mutual understanding, based on an approach that revolves around three desirable thematic lines: (1) generic competences; (2) competences specific to each subject area (skills, knowledge and content); and (3) learning, teaching, and learning evaluation (guarantee and quality of learning).

The Tuning project defines two groups of competences: "general competences", understood as the combination of attributes, aptitudes, skills, abilities, and general professional or academic responsibilities; and "specific competences", i.e., those corresponding to each area of knowledge, qualification, or particular discipline [15]. General competences therefore include the so-called "transversal competences", which are linked to personal and professional development and considered as generic, that is, common to all disciplines [14,30,31]. According to Wilhelm et al. [32] (p. 6) and to the Competence Definition and Selection Project (DeSeCo) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [33] (p. 4), the notion of competence refers to "the ability to satisfy complex demands by harnessing and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context". For his part, Weinert [34] also alludes to the cognitive and personal aspects of competences, highlighting individuals and their willingness to act.

The Catalogue of Transversal Competences of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) [35] and the Tuning Project define the following competences as transversal: (1) autonomy and self-regulation; (2) social commitment; (3) communication and multilingualism; (4) ethics and professional responsibility; (5) information management and digital citizenship; (6) innovation and learning; (7) critical thinking; and (8) teamwork.

Authors such as Niemi et al. [22], Martínez-Clares and González-Morga [36], Blanco et al. [14] and Simões and Sangiamchit [23] support the idea that active teaching–learning methods facilitate the acquisition and development of transversal competences.

Likewise, the questionnaire is recognised as part of the techniques that make it possible to evaluate the students' acquisition of competences and, in addition, to ascertain their

satisfaction with the learning outcomes. We find evidence of this both in the scientific literature in Europe [37,38] and in Spain [36,39].

1.3. European Research and Experiences in Active Learning

In recent decades, there is a growing interest in European universities regarding the use of active methods, which is reflected in the number of recent research and experiences in different areas of knowledge [6,7,11–13,18,22,23,27,36–41]. In this line, the EHEA encourages the inclusion of methodologies that are adapted to the academic and professional development of each specific field of study [29].

In the case of social work, different research has shown the benefits of a learner-centred approach through active methods. Domenech-López and Giménez-Bertomeu [42], for example, highlight the importance of involving students not only in the execution of learning activities, but also in their design and evaluation. Likewise, Mohedano-Menéndez et al. [43] underline the necessary collaboration between students and teachers when creating a shared teaching–learning space.

Ferrer-Aracil et al. [44] and Ferrer-Aracil et al. [45], for their part, highlight how active methods allow students to better understand the theoretical and practical bases of the subject in question, as well as to acquire skills in a conscious manner. In this sense, Gómez-Poyato et al. [46] argue that students who use this type of method have higher academic performance and a lower perception of difficulty than those who use more traditional methods.

On the other hand, the work of Yang et al. [47] confirms that active methods can be applicable in Social Work in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

The interest of this research focuses on debate as an instrument "characteristic of active methodologies" [48] (p. 313). Debating has recently gained in popularity as a competence-acquisition instrument in higher education owing to its attractive set of features: it is, for example, playful, challenging, and makes training fun [49]. According to Sánchez [48], it addresses the following active learning characteristics (pp. 314–315): (1) constructivism (shared knowledge); (2) personal responsibility; (3) shared responsibility; (4) interpersonal skills; (5) teamwork; (6) autonomy; (7) responding to questions or problems; (8) understanding concepts; (9) real situations; (10) decision-making and timeliness; (11) knowledge use; (12) undertaking complex problems or situations; (13) information analysis; and (14) positioning on a specific issue.

Moreover, introducing a jury as an evaluation system can enhance the competitive and challenging nature of the activity, further encouraging students' active participation [48,49].

For Perandones et al. [50], the pedagogical use of debates promotes the acquisition of positive values, improves critical thinking and self-awareness, and builds communication as well as cognitive skills and attitudes; it also fosters student interactions and social relationships. In this line, Argyropoulou [51] stresses that it contributes to the development of critical, analytical and communicative skills, as well as the transformation of attitudes for one's personal and professional life. Debating opens up new ways of thinking [17].

Jones et al. [52] show that debates do not need to be face-to-face to facilitate active learning, as online debates can also be a valuable pedagogical tool. In any case, structuring the debate is essential to maximise its educational benefits [48,51,53]. This structuring involves establishing an organisational framework with clear rules, roles, and guidelines, both from the perspective of students and teachers.

In line with the above, there were multiple study objectives. On the one hand, we sought to collect students' perceptions of debating as an instrument that allows for the development of transversal attitudes necessary for professional and social qualifications. On the other, we wished to know their perceptions and evaluations of the teaching activity. Another objective was to uncover perception differences and any possible correlations with age, gender, university access modality, and group type (i.e., with or without a peer jury).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Context and Approach

The teaching activity under study consisted of preparing and participating in a structured debate around the following topics: (1) the significance of the common or public domain, i.e., what belongs to all and is for everyone; (2) respect for human rights, that is, the right to a dignified life for all people; (3) experiences of altruism, cooperation, reciprocity, solidarity, mutual support, etc.; (4) pluralism based on the coexistence of different cultures; and lastly (5) the role of social networks and virtual communities.

The activity unfolded within the "Social Work with Communities" course, which was part of the social work degree at the University of Alicante (year 2020–2021). This compulsory third-year course addresses the principles, models, methods, and essential techniques of community social work [54–56]. Two student groups were formed, as well as a peer jury, which was used as a pedagogical tool within an educational debate framework. The control group did not have a peer jury and the other group did.

The research questions are as follows:

- How do students perceive the usefulness of the debate contents and the debate organisation?
- How do students perceive the degree to which debating contributes to the development of transversal attitudes?
- How do students evaluate the educational activity?
- Can any correlations be established between the age, perception, and activity evaluation variables?
- Do perceptions and activity evaluations differ according to gender or to university access modality? Do they differ according to whether or not the group had a peer jury?
- Can any associations be established between perceptions and activity evaluations?

To answer these questions, a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory approach was adopted, using the questionnaire as a data collection technique [57,58].

2.2. Participants

The study population comprised the 74 students enrolled in the "Social Work with Communities" course mentioned above, aged between 20 and 31 years (Mean = 22.34 years; SD = 2.44). Their sociodemographic profile is described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile of the sample.

Characteristic	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	9	12.2
Female	65	87.8
Modality of access to the university		
Test for Baccalaureate (A-level) students	66	89.2
Vocational education studies	8	10.8
Group type		
No peer jury	31	41.9
With a peer jury	43	58.1

2.3. Data Collection

The data were collected using an ad hoc questionnaire composed of 7 questions and 15 variables, with different measurement levels (nominal, ordinal and scale). The questionnaire was divided into the following sections (Table 2):

- Sociodemographic characteristics;
- Perception of educational activity;
- Perception of the degree of contribution of the educational activity to the development of transversal attitudes;

- Evaluation of educational activity.

Table 2. Variables under study.

Sections	Variables
Sociodemographic characteristics	Group Gender Age Modality of access to the university
Perception of educational activity	Content usefulness Suitability of the organisation
Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes	Communication Innovation and entrepreneurship Social commitment Critical thinking Information management Autonomy and self-regulation Teamwork
Evaluation of educational activity	Usefulness of the debate for learning Usefulness of the jury for learning

The perception of educational activity and the degree of development of transversal attitudes were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being the minimum score (strongly disagree) and 5 the maximum (strongly agree). Indeed, the Likert scale has been found to be an effective tool for collecting and measuring data on people's attitudes, valuations, and opinions [59] (p. 50). A 5-point Likert scale was also used to evaluate the educational activity, with 1 being the minimum score (highly negative) and 5 the maximum (highly positive).

The attitudes analysed were those required to develop transversal competences, that is, social skills and behaviours that facilitate professional performance and active participation. The descriptors of the transversal attitude variables were formulated using the Catalogue of Transversal Competences elaborated by the University of the Basque Country [35]. One descriptor was chosen for each transversal competence, and we adapted them to the educational activity (the debate) for subsequent analysis (Table 3).

The scores of the transversal attitude scale showed excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91; McDonald's omega = 0.91).

The data analysis was univariate and bivariate, descriptive, and explanatory [60], and was conducted using the *IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences v.28.* In the descriptive analysis, absolute and relative frequencies as well as descriptive statistics were used to summarise participant characteristics. Likewise, statistics of central tendency (mean and median) and dispersion (standard deviation and range) were used to describe students' perceptions and evaluations. For the explanatory analysis, differences between groups were explored by performing Student's t test or through its non-parametric equivalent as a function of sample size ($n < 30$) (Mann–Whitney U test for independent samples) [61]. The associations between quantitative variables were analysed using Pearson's correlation coefficient r and triangulated with Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient, considering only moderate or higher strength associations.

Table 3. Descriptors of the transversal attitudes under study.

Variables	Descriptors
Communication	1. The debate facilitated free expression and exchange of opinions, knowledge, and feelings.
Innovation and entrepreneurship	2. The debate contributed to discovering and understanding different points of view, helping to identify the implications for professional practice.
Social commitment	3. The debate helped to identify stereotypes and prejudices, as well as ethnocentric and/or androcentric tendencies.
Critical thinking	4. The debate made it possible to analyse and interpret the information obtained, helping me to determine my own positions.
Information management	5. The debate allowed me to explore, define, and explain situations while following a scientific–technical procedure.
Autonomy and self-regulation	6. The debate helped me to relate contents of different subjects in the degree.
Teamwork	7. The debate encouraged teamwork.

3. Results

3.1. Student Perception

The students' perceptions of the effectiveness of debating for learning was medium-high regarding organisation suitability and content usefulness (Table 4). This perception could be associated with the fact that the students have perceived an adequate structure of rules, roles, and participation guidelines, as well as themes consistent with the curricular objectives that provided the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge.

Table 4. Perception of educational activity and of the degree of development of transversal attitudes.

	Mean	SD	Median	Range
Perception of educational activity				
Content usefulness	4.19	0.89	4.00	4
Organisation suitability	4.42	0.84	5.00	4
Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes				
Communication	4.32	0.89	5.00	4
Innovation and entrepreneurship	4.31	0.92	5.00	4
Social commitment	4.09	0.98	4.00	4
Critical thinking	3.91	0.97	4.00	4
Information management	4.05	0.92	4.00	4
Autonomy and self-regulation	3.68	1.06	4.00	4
Teamwork	4.07	0.87	4.00	4

On the other hand, students considered that the educational activity contributed to a medium-high degree to the development of attitudes relating to the following transversal competences (Table 4): communication, innovation and entrepreneurship, social commitment, teamwork, and information management. With respect to competences relating to critical thinking, autonomy, and self-regulation, students considered that the activity contributed to their development to a moderate degree (Table 4). Taken together, these results could indicate that the debate provided a multidimensional learning space, intertwining cognitive aspects, such as analysing and interpreting information; emotional aspects, such as expressing and exchanging opinions; and social aspects, such as teamwork.

Age did not correlate in any statistically significant way with the perception of educational activity nor with the perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes.

Neither were there any statistically significant differences according to gender. This can be explained by an insufficient variability in the participating students to lead to significant differences in the aspects mentioned above, especially in terms of gender (remember that the total male participants was 9). In addition, the specific context of a course such as Social Work with Communities may have been particularly oriented towards creating the conditions for an equal participation of the student body as a whole.

Conversely, statistically significant differences were found according to the university access modality and the participant's group. In the first case, differences among the following variables were observed:

- Perception of educational activity: usefulness of the contents (U = 366,000; $p = 0.010$);
- Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes: communication (U = 366,000; $p = 0.048$), innovation and entrepreneurship (U = 401,500; $p = 0.011$), social commitment (U = 402,000; $p = 0.010$), and autonomy and self-regulation (U = 398,000; $p = 0.010$).

In all cases, students coming from vocational studies showed significantly higher values (high) than Baccalaureate (A-level) high school students (medium-high) (Table 5), indicating that the former perceived the indicated aspects more positively. However, the fact that significant differences are observed in the assessment of the debate in those who came from vocational education studies, who were older students than those who came from the Baccalaureate, but that this assessment is not associated with age, seems to point to the existence of mediating variables that have not been explored in this research, such as previous experiences (personal, educational, or professional), motivation for study, or the level of maturity, among others.

Table 5. Perception of the educational activity and of the degree of development of transversal attitudes, according to university access modality (statistically significant differences).

	Access through Tests for Baccalaureate/A-Level High School Students (n = 66)				**Access through Vocational Studies (n = 8)**			
	Mean	*SD*	*Median*	*Range*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Perception of educational activity								
Content usefulness	4.11	0.90	4.00	4	4.88	0.35	5.00	4
Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes								
Communication	4.26	0.92	5.00	4	4.88	0.35	5.00	1
Innovation and entrepreneurship	4.24	0.95	5.00	4	4.88	0.35	5.00	1
Social commitment	4.00	0.99	5.00	4	4.88	0.35	5.00	1
Autonomy and self-regulation	3.58	1.07	3.00	4	4.50	0.54	4.50	1

In the second case, differences were found among the following variables:

- Perception of educational activity: content usefulness (t 72 = −2.736; $p = 0.008$) and debate organisation ($t_{72} = -1.989$; $p = 0.050$);
- Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes: communication ($t_{72} = -2.471$; $p = 0.016$).

In all cases, students in the peer-jury group showed significantly higher values (medium-high and high) than students in the group without a peer jury (medium-high) (Table 6), that is, the former valued the aspects more favourably. No statistically significant differences were found regarding the other aspects of the perception of the activity and the degree of development of transversal attitudes.

These results show that the presence of a jury composed of the students themselves could be associated with an additional stimulus in this group, in terms of increased motivation or greater effort to take advantage of the activity.

Table 6. Perception of the educational activity and of the degree of development of transversal attitudes, according to group type (statistically significant differences).

	Non-Peer-Jury Group (n = 31)				Peer-Jury Group (n = 43)			
	Mean	*SD*	*Median*	*Range*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Median*	*Range*
Perception of educational activity								
Content usefulness	3.87	0.72	4.00	3	4.42	0.93	5.00	4
Organisation suitability	4.19	0.75	4.00	2	4.58	0.88	5.00	4
Perception of the degree of development of transversal attitudes								
Communication	4.03	0.84	4.00	3	4.53	0.88	5.00	5

3.2. Evaluation of Educational Activity

The students' evaluation of the educational activity was positive regarding the usefulness of debating and of the peer jury for learning (Table 7). Both aspects were rated medium-high, which might suggest that debating has enabled students to participate actively and effectively in their own learning process.

Table 7. Evaluation of educational activity.

	Mean	**SD**	**Median**	**Range**
Evaluation of educational activity				
Usefulness of debating for learning	4.24	0.77	4.00	4
Usefulness of the jury for learning	4.49	0.91	5.00	4

Again, age failed to show any statistically significant correlations with either of the two evaluated educational activity elements, nor were statistically significant differences found based on gender, university access modality, or group. This shows that the evaluation of educational activity made by students is independent of the sociodemographic variables analysed.

3.3. Perception and Evaluation: Associations

To verify whether any association existed between perception and activity evaluation, we analysed bivariate correlations between the different components of both.

Moderate to very strong positive associations were found among all the variables that integrated perception and activity evaluation. The latter indicated that the more positively an element was valued, the more positively the other elements were also valued, and vice versa.

After triangulating the parametric and non-parametric correlation tests, the strongest associations were found between the degree of development of the transversal attitude related to innovation and entrepreneurship, and the following activity perception elements:

- Debate content usefulness (r = 0.800, $p < 0.001$; rho = 0.731, $p < 0.001$);
- Debate organisation suitability (r = 0.765, $p < 0.001$; rho = 0.702, $p < 0.001$).

Thus, the greater the perception that the activity had contributed to the development of innovation and entrepreneurship, the greater the content adequacy and the debate organisation suitability for learning, and vice versa.

Similarly, a very strong positive correlation was found between the perceived degree of development of the transversal attitude related to innovation and entrepreneurship and the degree of development of the transversal attitude related to communication (r = 0.726, $p < 0.001$; rho = 0.721, $p < 0.001$). This indicated that the greater the perception that the debate contributed to the development of the attitude towards communication, the greater the perception that it contributed to the development of the attitude towards innovation and entrepreneurship, and vice versa.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The objective of acquiring transversal competences has been extensively pursued ever since the Bologna Declaration and the implementation of the EHEA [15]. These competences encompass not only knowledge, but also skills, abilities, attitudes and values that are relevant and applicable to any degree, as it is recognised that the mastery of a particular discipline is not enough to cope with the complexity of today's world of work and society in general [15,30,31].

Several research studies have analysed the acquisition or development of transversal competences through active teaching–learning methods [14,22,23,36]. These methods are based on the assumption or premise that students learn more and, above all, better when they actively participate in the creation of their own knowledge [12].

In the present study, we analysed how students enrolled in the "Social Work with Communities" course included in the social work degree programme at the University of Alicante perceived the use of active teaching–learning methods, specifically debates, to acquire attitudes included in transversal competences [35].

The results provided solid empirical evidence regarding the research questions posed. This evidence, described in detail in the Results section, is synthesised and discussed below.

The use of active teaching-learning methods when perceived as satisfactory in terms of usefulness and appropriateness, such as the present discussion, can have a considerable impact on the acquisition or development of multiple competences. This is in line with studies such as those of Ferrer-Aracil et al. [44,45], who analysed the competence benefits of using active methods—in their case, project-based learning and research-based learning. However, it differs from other studies, such as that of Gómez-Poyato et al. [46], who found no association between satisfaction with the use of active methods—in their case, flipped classroom and role-playing—and learning.

The use of active teaching-learning methods provides participating students with opportunities to drive their own educational process, enhancing their autonomy and teamwork [11,14,22,36,42]. Nevertheless, although autonomy and teamwork constitute a key attitudes, students also notably valued the acquisition of others such as communication [17,20,41,51–53], innovation [27,52], social commitment [36], critical thinking [17,23,51] or information management [13,20,51].

Transversal competences generally play an essential role in social work practice [41,46,62]. These attitudes are, however, especially determinant in the practice of community social work, where the objective is to help communities to develop novel, participatory, and effective shared work initiatives in order to improve their members' living conditions, generating solidarity and agency [54–56].

Students who accessed university through vocational studies valued debates more positively than those who came from Baccalaureate (A-level) high school, although the latter group also gave a medium-high assessment score to the activity. This difference may owe to the fact that debates can be perceived as a more practical, world-oriented or work-oriented activity, in contrast to more traditional teaching methods. The latter would support previous studies, such as those of Fallahi and Haney [53], Sánchez [48] and Sánchez et al. [49], which highlighted the practical component of debating.

Notable among the results was also the fact that the students who were evaluated by their peer group presented higher rates of satisfaction and of perception of development of transversal attitudes than the group that was evaluated by the teaching staff. This is partially consistent with the work of Domenech-López and Giménez-Bertomeu [42], who found positive evidence about the use of self-assessment tools by students, although, in their study, student assessment worsens when the evaluator is from outside the working subgroup. Other research also supports the fact that a peer jury, as an educational evaluation technique, can motivate students and enhance the benefits of debating [48,49]. Likewise, Fidalgo-Blanco et al. [11] and Ferreiro [39] highlight the need to incorporate evaluation as a structural element of active learning.

Debating allows students to analyse and compare information received during practical experience and to connect it with the contents of the Social Work with Communities course. Previous studies, such as that of Argyropoulou [51] in the context of a master's degree in education, provide similar results in this regard. In this way, students and teachers are able to cocreate knowledge, with students becoming the true protagonists while teachers guide the activity, thus materialising the objectives of the EHEA in this matter [12].

To conclude, the results indicated that students positively perceived debating as an instrument to develop relevant transversal attitudes. Differences in perceptions were observed according to university access modality and the evaluation agent. This evidence not only highlights the usefulness of debating as a pedagogical tool, but also suggests the need to consider different contextual factors when implementing debates in social work studies.

Finally, the study presented a number of limitations that do not discredit the work in scientific terms, but which must be considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample was small (n = 74), limited to a specific degree (social work) and was biased in terms of gender (n = 65 female and n = 9 male). The latter is due to the structural feminisation of Social Work [63]. This limitation makes it impossible, for example, to generalise the results to all university students. Second, the study design was exclusively quantitative in nature and therefore did not collect the reasons underlying the answers of the participating students. Given these limitations, we suggest that future studies use larger as well as more diversified samples (for example, from other courses of the same degree or from the same course at other universities) in order to have more elements for comparison, and combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Additional variables to those included in this research could also be considered. From the teachers' perspective, for example, their perception of the cost/benefit of integrating active methods in their classes, and from the students' perspective, variables such as previous experiences (personal, educational or professional), motivation to study or level of maturity, among others, could be considered to help increase understanding of the results. Finally, one could even consider the establishment of a control group, in which the teaching–learning process is carried out using traditional methods, as a point of comparison.

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